



NUPEDIA.COM STATEMENT OF EDITORIAL POLICY

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With many revisions suggested by many different people; this statement is still under development.

Note: in most browsers, you will be reading this in a new window. In that case, simply close this window when done printing. Otherwise, press the "back" button on your browser when you're finished.

This is a statement of the policies and procedures that that editors, peer reviewers, writers, and copyeditors will be expected to follow in the production of the Nupedia encyclopedia.

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I. DEFINITIONS OF SOME KEY TERMS.

Some definitions of a few key terms will be useful in advance. Further clarification of these terms is given throughout this document.

Associated with the categories listed [here](#) are *editorial review groups* made up of a subject area editor, peer reviewers, and interested members of the public subscribed to an associated mailing list. (Information on mailing lists is [here](#))

A review group is considered to be *functioning* when the category has an editor and at least two peer reviewers. The *steering committee* of the category consists, essentially, of the first members of a functioning editorial review group.

The *subject area editor* of a category, such as Classics, is the person responsible for giving final approval to articles in the category, approving new peer reviewers in the category, and organizing discussion on new categories.

A *peer reviewer* for a category is a person officially designated as being responsible for discussing article submissions and guidelines on the review group's mailing list.

A *copyeditor* is a person charged with ensuring that articles are written in excellent standard American English, and hence is

concerned with grammar, spelling, punctuation, usage, and style.

The Nupedia *advisory board* or *advisory group* consists of subscribers, from among editors and peer reviewers, to a mailing list. Issues of policy are discussed and settled upon by this group. The advisory board has contributed many valuable changes and additions to this policy statement.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE EDITORIAL PROCESS.

Here is an outline of the proposed Nupedia editorial process:

The name of a topic is added to Nupedia's database by the editor-in-chief or by one of the subject editors. A writer (often, and as appropriate, an expert on the topic) asks the editor to be assigned that topic, or an editor asks someone to write on it. In any event, the topic is assigned and the writer goes to work. The resulting draft article is posted on the relevant review group (or, in some cases, groups); peer reviewers suggest revisions. When approved by the copyeditors, the writer submits the article to the topic editor, who either approves the article or sends it back for further revision. When approved by the subject editor, the article is then submitted to the copyediting group. After the article has been checked and revised for good grammar, usage, etc., the completed article is inputted into an article submission form on the website. From that the article is converted into XML format and the article is uploaded into Nupedia's database, ready for public access.

Most of the rest of this document is an elaboration of the steps involved in the above-described process.

III. GENERAL NUPEDIA POLICIES.

A. GOALS OF THE PROJECT.

Our long-term goal is to create an open content encyclopedia, usefully cross-referenced, arranged, and searchable, freely available on the web and in various other inexpensive formats, and with a greater amount of content than any encyclopedia has had in history. Also essential to our goal is that articles will be peer-reviewed and academically respectable, unbiased, translated into various non-English languages, and will offer both practical and theoretical information. The leaders of the Nupedia project recognize that this goal cannot be achieved without considerable time, effort, and ambition, as well as some humility.

Significant near-term milestones will be reached when: (1) our first article is given final approval; (2) our first article appears on the website; (3) all of our review groups are staffed; (4) at least one article from each subject area appears on the website; and (5) 1,000 articles appear on the website.

B. OUR AUDIENCE.

Articles, and particularly introductory and general articles, should be readily comprehensible to nonspecialists and nonacademics generally, and all purely technical terms should be defined. General articles are to be written for an average college graduate, or for an intelligent high school graduate. Articles on technical and abstruse subjects and on current topics of debate among specialists may be fully understandable only by some people with advanced degrees in those subjects, and should always be linked to more general articles where the subject is discussed, at least briefly. Nonetheless, all Nupedia articles are meant for the consumption of educated adults and are to be written so simply, clearly, and with such liveliness that others will have relatively little trouble understanding them. This does not imply that vocabulary and sentence construction are to be simplified for the purpose of being easier for beginners such as schoolchildren to understand; Nupedia materials can, under our open content license, be adapted for them in all sorts of ways.

The responsibility for ensuring that articles are well-written for our audience falls to all our contributors -- editors, peer reviewers, proofreaders, and of course writers.

C. LACK OF BIAS.

Nupedia articles are to be unbiased. There may be respectable reference works that permit authors to take recognizable stands on controversial issues, but this is not one of them.

This question is a good (albeit not infallible) test of a lack of bias: "On every issue about which there might be even minor dispute among experts on this subject, is it very difficult or impossible for the reader to determine what side the author falls on?"

This requires that, for each controversial view discussed, the author of an article (at a bare minimum) *mention* various opposing views that are taken seriously by any significant minority of experts (or concerned parties) on the subject. In longer articles, of course, opposing views will be spelled out in considerable detail. In a final version of the article, every party to the controversy in question must be able to judge that its views have been fairly presented, or as fairly as is possible in a context in which other, opposing views must also be presented as fairly as possible. Moreover, if objections to any particular views are offered (which will be an essential component to certain articles, e.g., those on philosophy and public policy), the most serious or relevant objections to other, opposing views must be offered as well. The reader should, ideally, be given the tools for deciding the issue; or, failing that, the reader should be introduced to the problems that must be solved in order to decide the issue.

On a controversial issue, it is usually important to state which views, if any, are now (or were at some time) in favor and no longer in favor (among experts or some other specified group of people). But even this information can and should be imparted in such a fashion as not to imply that the majority view is correct, or even that it has any more presumption in its favor than is implied by the plain fact of its popularity.

To present a subject without bias, one must pay attention not just to the matters of which views and arguments are presented, but also to their wording or the tone in which they are mentioned. Nupedia articles should avoid describing controversial views, persons, events, etc., in language that can plausibly be regarded as implying some value judgment, whether positive or negative. It will suffice to state the relevant facts, to describe various views about those facts, and then let readers make up their own minds about what the correct views are.

This policy does not mean that you may not, to a large extent, speak with your own voice in terms of writing style (certainly you may; and see below). Writers should avoid use of the first person, however; the third person will be expected, and if the first person is used, it will require editorial approval (it will have to be for a very good reason).

IV. CHOOSING ARTICLE TOPICS.

Because Nupedia will be arranged in hypertext format, there is no need to solve the classic encyclopedists' dilemma, namely, the choice between writing many brief articles on specific topics or fewer long articles on general topics. We can have articles at virtually all levels of generality.

Initial topics to be created and assigned will, ideally, be general topics as well as other topics that the steering committee believes will be, for one reason or another, in highest demand among Nupedia readers.

The editor of a category must approve of all topics to be assigned, or else assign this responsibility to one or more trusted specialists on particular subtopics. In deciding on whether to include some topic in Nupedia (and how precisely to word the title), some general rules that should be borne in mind:

- In a title, prefer the more common of two or more names for a thing, unless one of the less common titles is clearly

more appropriate. Thus our music group may prefer to title an article about the orchestral instrument as *cello*, not *violincello*; but we may use *automobile* rather than *car* due to the ambiguity of the latter. (However, for searching purposes, all variants on names should be in the Nupedia database as alternate titles. Instructions on how writers should indicate alternate titles for articles will appear in later editions of this policy statement.)

- Ambiguous words in titles are to be disambiguated with parenthetical clarifications. Thus: *Athens (Greece)* and *Athens (Georgia, U.S.A.)*. Also: *Madonna (pop singer)* and *Madonna (Virgin Mary)*.
- Subtopics of more general topics are to be indicated without the use of commas. Thus: *history of morality*, not *morality, history of* (or *history of morals* -- that's up to our cultural historians to decide); *nineteenth-century German drama*, not *drama, nineteenth-century German*.

In an online encyclopedia, articles that are found by searching a database rather than looking an article up in an alphabetically-arranged volume, there is no need for rearranging titles in this way. (However, again, for searching purposes we may wish to include titles rearranged in different orders; we'll consult with our programmers to see whether it would be useful to do so, and post an update on this point in a later version of this policy statement.)

- Similarly, names of persons should be stated with first names first and last names last: *George Washington*; *Sir Walter Scott*; *Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- The American English words for things are to be used in article titles. Thus: *Rome*, not *Roma*. Of course, when articles are translated into other languages, titles will also be translated. Also, titles in other languages may be indicated in the articles themselves, if relevant, and as alternate titles (as per the above discussion).
- Avoid creating two topics that are, conceptually, closely related. The point here is to avoid duplication of effort. An example should help. *Ethics* is a subcategory of philosophy and will certainly be a topic (and probably a subcategory). So, perhaps, the topic *morality* should not also be created, except as part of a distinct topic such as *history of morality* or an article about the state of morality in the contemporary world. Alternatively, we might have an article explaining the meaning of 'morality' as understood by philosophers and other groups, concluding with a prominent link to the article on ethics for more in-depth exploration of morality. Topics should not be created for alternate designations for a single place, person, etc.; it's either *Cicero* or *Tully*, or even better, *Marcus Tullius Cicero*.

Editors will be sent instructions on how to enter topics into the Nupedia database (when they are available).

Associated with each topic will be a review group or groups. For many topics, of course, there will be one obvious review group responsible for overseeing the topic. Less frequently there will be topics that we will want edited by more than one group; e.g., *God* or *deity* will probably need input both from philologic-l (the philosophers and logicians) as well as religion-l. If there is any question about this, please consult with the editor-in-chief; this sort of issue should also be discussed by the Nupedia advisory group. As a rule of thumb: if within a given discipline there are experts who study the topic in considerable depth, the corresponding review group ought to have a say about the article. Generally, editors are expected to be alert to the fact that other review groups may want to have a say about certain topics that they create. In obvious cases, he or she may simply enter in both (or all) relevant groups into the *area* part of the article assignment form. In less obvious cases, he or she may wish to consult with the other area editors and the editor-in-chief.

There should be one *primary* editorial group associated with every topic in any case. In case of dispute or uncertainty, the decision as to which group this will be will be left up to the editor-in-chief. The editor of the *primary* editorial group will have final responsibility for determining who is assigned the topic.

V. ASSIGNING ARTICLES.

Nupedia topics will be assigned to writers or collaborators. Potential writers should contact the relevant category editor and ask to be assigned topics on which they wish to write (or on which they have already written an article). Moreover, editors may wish to contact known and respected writers to write articles on a given topic.

A. QUALIFICATIONS OF WRITERS.

Editors (and peer reviewers assigned this responsibility by editors) should determine, before making an assignment, that a candidate writer is adequately qualified for the job. There are some Nupedia topics on which, no doubt, very satisfactory brief articles could be written by a good writer with no special training at all, or a hobbyist's interest. A great many of the more specialized topics, and perhaps the bulk of topics overall, however, should be assigned to specialists in the relevant field. The rule of thumb an editor should bear in mind is: would an article on this topic be of significantly greater quality if it were written by an expert on the subject? If yes, we will require that the writer be an expert on the subject. If no, nonspecialists (who are good writers) are more than welcome.

Expert, however, is a notoriously ambiguous term. Just to take an example (that is not intended to bear any relation to any actual person): if a man who had received a Master's degree in French literature focusing exclusively on Victor Hugo had written a dozen or more peer-reviewed articles about Hugo, the fact that he lacks a Ph.D. should not stop us from assigning him topics related directly to Hugo. The same man, however, should probably not write the general article on nineteenth-century French literature; that job would belong to someone with a broader background. Moreover, if he wrote his articles two decades ago, has not studied or published very much since then, and there is no danger of our being unable to find a suitable Hugo expert, then we should probably not assign him the Hugo article.

In most cases we will want to assign topics to persons who have already done extensive, high-quality research (not necessarily published work, but probably, in most cases) on those topics. It obviously is not necessary, to have done extensive, high-quality research on a topic, to have any particular degree at all.

B. WHOM TO ASSIGN A TOPIC, AND WHAT TO ASSIGN WHEN.

Editors should focus first on assigning topics that they expect to be popular and in demand among encyclopedia readers. Of course, if a writer asks to be assigned an article on any topic, including *unpopular* topics, it should be assigned (provided the writer is suitable for the job, and with exceptions as noted below).

It should be helpful to assign biographies of figures associated with particular theories, movements, historical events, etc., at the same time as main articles on related subjects.

The subject area editors have broad discretion on whom they wish to assign topics. As general guidelines, however, the following should suffice -- Any qualified writer who asks to be assigned a topic should be assigned that topic, *unless* the editor wishes to reserve the topic for some special reason. Peer reviewers should be assigned nearly any topic they request; an editor would have to have a rather good reason to deny the request (e.g., the peer reviewer is not an expert in the subject, and a much-better qualified person will soon be able to write the article). Editors may reserve certain topics for themselves.

Moreover, of course, editors may wish to earmark certain topics or groups of topics for assignment to any of a number of experts not yet associated with Nupedia in any way. Editors and others may wish to solicit help from the authors of informational websites; information from such websites might be adapted for use on Nupedia (but on the topic of adapting pre-existing materials, please see below).

Most, if not all, of the initial articles to be assigned will be brief, introductory articles, on which, see below; our aim is achieve considerable breadth before adding detail. *Note well*: the person or persons responsible for the introductory article on a topic need *not* be the same as the person or persons who write the longer article on that topic (again, see below). The longer article will require a separate assignment.

If a subject editor has any question, particularly on decisions that might be seen as setting important precedents, on whom should be assigned a topic, the editor should consult with the editor-in-chief.

C. HOW TO ASSIGN AN ARTICLE AND CHECK ASSIGNMENTS.

We will have a web page input form that editors can use to create topics, assign them to particular people, and set official deadlines. Instructions on the location and use of this form will be sent to editors when the instructions become available. Meanwhile, assignments will just have to be tracked by hand by individual editors.

There will be a link on the website to a page from which writers may check whether a topic has been created yet, whether it has been assigned, to whom it has been assigned, and what the deadline is. We'll let members know when this is available.

Subject area editors are officially permitted to be as strict or as lenient with deadlines as they see fit. An editor might wish to tell writers that if an article on a topic is not received by the deadline, then it may be immediately reassigned to someone else -- that would be fine. An editor might also wish to tell writers that deadlines are very flexible. Personal experience will no doubt suggest a happy medium of some sort.

VI. GENERAL NUPEDIA GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ARTICLES.

There will be two different kinds of Nupedia guidelines for writing articles: general, Nupedia-wide guidelines, and guidelines set up for specific types of articles that fall under the purview of specific review groups. Writers are expected to be familiar with and to follow all relevant requirements, and peer reviewers and editors are expected to enforce them. The following are the general, Nupedia-wide guidelines.

A. GENERAL FEATURES OF WRITTEN STYLE.

Nupedia articles will, we hope, be exemplary specimens of written English. In general, we desire Nupedia articles to exhibit the following qualities (among others): unimpeachable standard American English usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling; clarity (i.e., being readily comprehensible by Nupedia's audience); the use of active voice and concrete language (with examples); a high degree of logical structure that is made plain to the reader; lack of bias; and a natural, lively, and even witty style. It is worth perusing Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* again as a general guide to style. Within the general constraints of good English, we want to encourage writers to be as lively, and even as humorous -- or at least good-natured -- as reasonably formal writing permits. Encyclopedia articles do not have to be written in a boring style.

B. OFFICIAL STYLE AND USAGE GUIDES.

Perhaps in the future there will be a manual of Nupedia (that's the adjective) style, but for now, we will adhere to the most recent edition (the 14th) of *The Chicago Manual of Style* on questions of punctuation, citation, and other issues. Questions of usage are to be answered with the help of the excellent, recently-published *Dictionary of Modern American Usage* by Bryan A. Garner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). (The hardcover edition of the latter is fairly inexpensive and can be ordered online.) All copyeditors will be expected to have and use these two references; editors, peer reviewers, and writers are encouraged to use them as well. Garner's pragmatic stance toward nonsexist language will be Nupedia policy.

On any matters of general policy left open, unclear, in dispute, etc. by these references, please consult the editor-in-chief; generally, these matters can be left officially unresolved, i.e., left to the discretion of individual writers and/or copyeditors. Forced to make a choice, in general, we will probably prefer the more well-established of two options; we have no great desire to be linguistic innovators (or, for that matter, dusty curmudgeons). We simply want Nupedia to be written in a fashion that is most easily understood by a reasonably intelligent contemporary reader.

C. SECTION HEADINGS.

In longer articles, descriptive, straightforward headings should announce the subjects of blocks of text (a group of, just for example, five related paragraphs).

D. EXPLAINING WHY A TOPIC IS IMPORTANT.

It is one thing to impart bare facts and information, and it is another to place the facts into a context whereby the reader can understand why a person, place, species, event, concept, etc., may be regarded as important. Nupedia will differ from some other encyclopedias by consistently highlighting the latter sort of information, when relevant. Claims about inventions, achievements, revolutions, assassinations, etc., can and should be placed in a broader context to explain why they do indeed

deserve our attention.

Thus, for example, in a bibliographic entry, the author should indicate *why* the actions of the entry's subject are regarded as important; it should be made clear what impact, whether good or ill, those actions have had. Another example: entries concerning inventions and discoveries should relate some hard facts that make it clear how and why the invention or discovery has impacted the world. Why *was* the cotton gin so important, anyway?

An explanation of the importance of a topic is an opportunity to entertain readers. It is also one sort of area where some care will be necessary, because, obviously, there is considerable disagreement about what are properly considered achievements, and whether the results of given acts and events have been positive or negative. So it will be important to avoid bias in explaining why certain topics are important. It may turn out that for one segment of the educated populace, a particular topic is simply not important, while for another it is extremely so, and that this difference in assessment is due to political or religious reasons, for example. In such a case it should be made clear, in as unbiased a fashion as possible, *for whom* the topic is important, and *why*.

E. HOW TO.

Philosophers distinguish between declarative knowledge, which is conveyed in the sort of declarative sentences ordinarily found in an ordinary encyclopedia, and procedural knowledge, or the knowledge of how to do things. A complete compendium of human knowledge, as an encyclopedia is supposed to be, ought to impart both kinds of knowledge insofar as mere words (and other online media) permit this. Thus, eventually, we will want articles not merely on the history of violins, the different violin makers, etc., but also on how to play the violin. Articles in the household management category should explain to bachelors and others how to cook and clean, and give advice to families on childrearing. Articles about dogs will not merely explain the physiology and typology of our canine friends but also their care and feeding.

F. EXPLAINING JARGON.

Jargon should not be used without being explained. This might be somewhat complicated in the context of Nupedia as a whole, because, very likely, the item of jargon will have its own entry, however brief. Hence some care must be taken to ensure that the gloss given of a bit of jargon squares with any "official account" already given in Nupedia. Explanation of jargon could (and no doubt will) be handled, in the future, using special cross-references (in which clicking on or hovering the mouse over a word will cause its definition to pop up); but until some such system has been perfected, the rule will be that all jargon should be explained within an article itself. This rule can be relaxed with regard to basic jargon within very advanced/specialized material that a lay audience could not be expected to understand in any case.

G. PRONUNCIATION.

Pronunciation of non-English and uncommon words and names should be given in parentheses. Generally, if there is a substantial chance that an American high school graduate will not know how to pronounce a word, name, etc., then supply a simple phonetic explanation. Examples: the Weimar (VY-mar) Republic; George Berkeley (BARK-ly). Perhaps our copyediting group will help establish easy-to-read standards for writing out the pronunciation of a word, or perhaps we will have someone create sound files so that the reader can hear the word spoken. For now, though, each syllable should be separated by a hyphen, the syllable receiving the main stress should be in upper case, and the spelling of the explanation should make it obvious on its face to English speakers how the word should be pronounced.

H. KEYWORDS.

As part of article submissions to Nupedia, keywords will be included for search purposes. Here the rule is: is this word a word that someone might type in hoping to find this particular article (among possibly many other articles)? If so, include that word among the keywords; if not, don't. Consequently, there need not be many keywords, but there is also no specific limit on number of keywords; if it so happens that this specific article may be of interest to people who search on thirty different words or phrases, then there might indeed be thirty different keywords. Further requirements about keywords will be provided when we know how our system will be using them.

I. BIBLIOGRAPHIES.

A bibliography will be associated with every (or nearly every) Nupedia article. Bibliographies should be compiled according to the applicable guidelines in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The purpose of the bibliography is twofold: to give readers credible sources of introductory reading, and to make a record of the most important, influential, etc., works on the subject in question.

J. CROSS-REFERENCES AND EXTERNAL LINKS.

We can distinguish between three kinds of links that we might consider including in a Nupedia article:

1. cross-references to other Nupedia articles and resources; e.g., the article *kangaroo* will have a link to the article *marsupial*;
2. links to off-site material that is essential to understanding the text of the article; e.g., an article about a classical Roman author will feature links to websites where that author's texts can be found; and
3. links to purely supplementary material; e.g., an article on horses might have a link to a general informational website about horses.

How we will handle links of type (1) (cross-references) remains to be seen, as this depends on how our software is written. At present, it is permitted (but not required) that writers and/or editors indicate where cross-references should appear in articles; what we will do with that information, when we are ready to input the articles into Nupedia's system, remains to be seen.

The URLs for any links of type (2) *must* be specified by the authors of articles.

Links of type (3) will, for now, be left out of Nupedia articles entirely. We might (and probably will), eventually, include associated web information -- what would be, essentially, a Nupedia web directory, integrated with our own content.

K. ADAPTING PRE-EXISTING MATERIALS.

Some people have already generously offered to Nupedia the use of their materials for inclusion in Nupedia. Exactly how these materials might be adapted for Nupedia's use is to be determined by the relevant subject area editor(s), but as a general rule, we expect all materials, if even previously web-posted or published, to undergo Nupedia's entire editorial process. Any exceptions to this general rule should be proposed to the editor-in-chief.

L. GRAPHICS.

We strongly encourage everyone working on Nupedia to seek out or create high-quality (noncopyrighted) graphics of all sorts to enhance articles. So submission of graphs, diagrams, maps, pictures, etc., is strongly encouraged. Each should be accompanied by a small thumbnail (e.g., 80x80 pixels) that users will be able to click on to see the larger image. We might (or might not) formulate guidelines on the use of graphics based on what we receive.

VII. ARTICLE REQUIREMENTS.

Here are some statements about what is required for a variety of *general* types of articles. Articles will also have to fulfill some more *specific* requirements for more specific types of articles; these more specific requirements will have to be obtained from the relevant subject area editors. In the future we might have a central web location where such requirements are posted.

A. THREE TYPES OF ARTICLES.

There will be three types of Nupedia articles: (1) a definition of the topic; (2) a brief, one-to-five paragraph introduction to the topic; (3) a longer article on the topic (that might repeat some of the material found in subtopics of the topic).

For example, at the top of the music category, we will have a page containing three texts on music in general. First, we'll have a fairly brief definition -- which, admittedly, is hardly needed, as everyone knows generally what we're talking about when we use the word "music"; but it's useful for purposes of introducing the topic and giving the reader a more precise idea of what will be covered by the topic. Second, after the definition, we might have some very introductory paragraphs concerning (just for example -- this is up to our musicologists) musical instruments, styles, composers, theory, and why anyone might want to study or make (as opposed to idly listen to) music. Third, there will be a list of links to the main subtopics of music; but at the top of that list of links will be a link to a longer article about music in general. This longer article might repeat (and indeed swipe material from -- remember, this is an open content encyclopedia!) relevant introductory sections from *subtopic* articles.

B. DEFINITIONS.

The first one or two sentences of a Nupedia article should contain a definition, or concise description, of the topic. As a rule, this sentence or these sentences should be written in plain, prosy, nonfancy language rather than specialists' jargon. The purpose of this definition is to introduce and clarify the topic of the article (category, subcategory, etc.) for people who do not know, or might not be quite sure, what the topic is. It is not to state The Truth as to what the proper analysis of the concept is. (A discussion of the literature of attempts to state that particular Truth, however, would be a very suitable subtopic in many cases.) Hence there is no requirement that the definition should avoid circularity or be perfectly precise, in the way that a technical definition should. Also, citing familiar examples of items mentioned in the definition (or of things to which the defined term applies) is to be preferred, not avoided.

More exactly what is required of definitions in various subject matters is also an issue for more specific policy-setting (or case-by-case decision), on which, see below.

C. BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS.

Following a definition (assuming more text is appropriate, which will almost always be the case), after beginning a new paragraph, there will be a brief, introductory article of one to five paragraphs on the topic. (Note that if the editor opts not to ask for an even longer article on the topic as well a definition and a brief introduction, then there might be, instead, a medium-length article of more than five paragraphs.) Unlike the definition, this brief introduction might contain (as appropriate), in addition to the sorts of information on the topic one might usually find in an encyclopedia, both introductory information on the importance of the topic as well as introductory practical ("how to") information.

D. LONGER ARTICLES.

In many cases, linked prominently below the brief introductory article will be a longer article on the same topic. But again, note that if the editor opts not to have, in addition to a definition and a brief introduction, a longer article on the topic, then in place of the brief introduction there might be a medium-length article that might be of more than five paragraphs. In the latter case, of course there would be no link to a longer article on the same topic.

A longer article may be of any length, but if it grows past, say, 3,000-5,000 words, then it should be truncated in some fashion, with individual parts of the article developed in more detail as subtopics; links to these subtopics should be added to the original category page below the link to the longer article.

An example should help here. Suppose I want to write about a priori knowledge. I begin with a definition of the concept. Then I write, probably, three paragraphs briefly outlining some leading issues surrounding the concept. Below those paragraphs is a link to a longer article about a priori knowledge. I find, however, that in supplying historical detail, and detail about the recent literature about the topic, my article grows to well over 5,000 words. Consulting with the relevant philosophy editor and perhaps also the relevant philosophy review group, I decide to truncate and summarize parts of my unwieldy article, and I request to create subtopics: the history of thought about a priori knowledge; current views on a priori knowledge; etc. (Precisely how the topic should be arranged, and even whether there should be a lengthy article on a priori knowledge in particular, is a matter for the philosophers to decide.) The new subtopics will have associated with them some manner of definition and brief introductory article. Many of the details about a priori knowledge that I had originally wanted to put in the longer article are now placed in the longer articles about the subtopics.

E. SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR BIOGRAPHIES.

Brief, introductory biographies should have the following information in the following order; a "definition" is unnecessary (the first few sentences will serve the same function):

Full name. (Alternate name(s) in parentheses.) Date of birth-date of death. Nationality (adjective) title (noun). (For example: American diplomat; Chinese artist; German scientist and polymath.) Primary achievements or claims to fame/notoriety in a sentence or two. Then the dates, names, and brief descriptions (as applicable and as space permits) of major works, laws, crimes, battles, reigns, etc., and, as per remarks below, some explanation of why the person's achievements are or have been regarded as important. Space permitting, a brief account of aspects of the figure's private life, e.g., where lived, who married to, employed doing what, etc.

The bulk of biographical articles should consist of discussion of the person's achievements or "claims to fame" as opposed to relatively inconsequential personal data. E.g., regarding the entry about Descartes, there should be a much higher priority placed on discussions of his dualism, rationalism, and methodological skepticism, and the impact that these views had, than on relating the tragic fashion in which he died. Of course, longer articles may be exhaustive in all respects.

Important presidents and monarchs, inventors, and other of the most influential people may merit four or five introductory paragraphs; everyone else will receive fewer.

VIII. SETTING CATEGORY-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ARTICLES.

Nupedia editorial groups will have to discuss and establish formats and guidelines for writing specific sorts of articles that are uniquely (or primarily) in their purview. For example, the biologists will have to discuss what is required for articles about different species; the historians will have to discuss what is required for articles about battles; the art historians will have to discuss what is required for articles about art styles.

It is the editor's responsibility to lead discussions on his or her review group with the aim of (1) identifying the types of articles for which there is a need for guidelines, and (2) actually setting guidelines for those article types. The editor might wish to assign the task of composing specific guidelines to particular specialists (though input should be possible from all quarters).

The editor should also take care to distinguish article types that are clearly in the review group's purview from those that are more general or global. Guidelines for the latter types of articles will be established under the direction of the editor-in-chief with the help of the advisory group, and will be posted in future versions of this policy statement.

An area editor, after consulting with the area's review group, may choose to adopt a more specialized style guide. When the specialized guide comes in conflict with *The Chicago Manual of Style* or *Garner's Dictionary*, then the latter are to outweigh the more specialized guide, with some exceptions at the area editor's discretion.

The initial articles to be assigned are to be brief, introductory articles. So, initially, there is not much point in discussing what needs to be contained in a longer article.

The area editor might wish use the occasion of the assignment of an instance of a new type of article as an excuse to discuss and formulate precise guidelines for that type of article. It is the editor's responsibility to make the resulting guidelines available to writers and peer reviewers. Nupedia's management can post copies of guidelines to the web, but the actual work of putting the guidelines into HTML is left to the editor to do or delegate. (On any given review group, we fully expect there to be at least one person who can convert simple text to HTML quite easily.)

As general advice on leading a discussion on requirements, editors should encourage discussants to think creatively about what sorts of qualities superlative articles need to have. They need not simply try to codify what a standard encyclopedia

article on a subject might include (and in fact they are discouraged from doing this); Nupedia's articles can and should be much better than ordinary encyclopedia articles, in terms of clarity, depth, organization, and other qualities. (Nonetheless, it is recommended that, in formulating guidelines, steering committees review a variety of reference works.) Hence a reader should, in the end, be able to find all the information and positive qualities in a Nupedia article that can be found in articles from any other encyclopedia, and more. We can't achieve this aim without setting ambitious specific guidelines.

Other Topics To Be Covered In Later Editions

(With some notes on selected topics)

Reviewing and approving articles
- suggested distribution format

Nupedia review groups will obviously be quite a different type of peer review process from the way a typical journal works. But I think it may work rather well (though that's certainly an empirical question), for the simple reason that the process of moving articles from the author's computer to Nupedia not be impeded by the delay of one reviewer. What is ideal (and, I think, probable) is that Nupedia will eventually attract several different experts qualified to judge the merits of any given article. And they may usefully brainstorm in a way that is particularly useful to the quality of the article.

This is not, however, *blind* review; peer reviewers may, perhaps, be more restrained than they might be in a blind review. On the other hand, the Internet already has a tendency to enliven conversation (to put it nicely) so perhaps the tendency toward restraint and rudeness will cancel each other out. However it works out, we will remain open to suggestions about improvement to the review process. We would also like to learn what works particularly well, so that information can be conveyed to other review groups or otherwise used as appropriate.

Review groups are open to participation by any Nupedia member, but because they will be moderated (probably by several different people) and tasked with the serious business of improving encyclopedia articles, members who are not reviewers should not expect that their comments to the review group will always be posted. Their input in any case is welcome.

Moderators are expected to keep conversation polite, on-topic, and helpful. They are authorized to reject any message that does not conform to these standards. On the other hand, a bit of latitude in this regard is encouraged, to oil the wheels of discourse, as it were. Moderators will initially be selected by Nupedia's editor-in-chief and/or the interim editor of the area.

Copyediting and approving articles
Editorial approval of articles
Recruiting new Nupedia members
Selecting new peer reviewers and subcategory editors
Creating new editorial groups
Creating subject subcategories
Translations of Nupedia articles from English into other languages (Eventually -- perhaps soon -- we will have a system in place in which we can accept translations of articles.)
Reader feedback (We are also going to set up a system whereby readers may easily give feedback to editors and writers on specific articles.)
Revising articles
Resolving disputes

Conclusion:

In a very real sense, Nupedia will be a worldwide community effort. In the spirit of Linux and the Open Directory Project, we want to set up the mechanisms whereby thousands of people can work together in a massive undertaking toward a

common, extremely ambitious goal. Indeed, Nupedia has the potential to become the finest general research resource the world has ever seen: the largest, most detailed, exhaustively edited, dynamic, widely translated, and unbiased encyclopedia in the history of the world. We feel this is a very worthy ambition.